

P 050829Z SEP 97
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9788
INFO CIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
AMCONSUL LAHORE

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 007636

DEPT FOR S/CT
DEPT ALSO FOR SA/RA

E.O. 12958: DECL: (1.6X1)
TAGS: [KPRP](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#)
SUBJ: JAMMU AND KASHMIR ISLAMIC FRONT (C-NA7-00565)

REFTELS: A) STATE 106548 B) NEW DELHI 6957 C) ISLAMABAD 5640

CLASSIFIED BY POLCOUNS TOM PRICE. REASON: 1.5 (C).

11. (S) IN RESPONSE TO REFTEL (A) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR ISLAMIC FRONT (JKIF), POLOFF, ACCOMPANIED BY POL FSN, VISITED THE JKIF'S ISLAMABAD OFFICE ON SEPTEMBER 4. MAKING AN APPOINTMENT TO MEET WITH THE JKIF WAS SOMETHING OF AN ORDEAL, BUT POL FSN FINALLY MANAGED TO TRACK DOWN AN ISLAMABAD PHONE NUMBER (445699) FOR THE GROUP. WHEN HE CALLED THE OFFICE, THE PERSON WHO ANSWERED REPEATEDLY ASKED IF THE CALL WAS BEING TAPED. "IF SO, I WILL SPEAK MORE CLEARLY," HE SAID, EVEN AFTER BEING ASSURED THAT THE CONVERSATION WAS NOT BEING MONITORED.

12. (S) FINDING THE JKIF OFFICE WAS ALMOST AS DIFFICULT AS MAKING AN APPOINTMENT. LOCATED IN THE CAPITAL CITY'S WESTERNMOST SUBURBS, THE GROUP'S HOUSE IS TUCKED INTO A NARROW ALLEY IN THE I/10-2 SECTOR (STREET 10, GALI (ALLEY) 27, HOUSE 1908). POLOFFS WERE USHERED INTO THE HOUSE BY DR. HAIDER, WHO IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE JKIF. HE IN TURN INTRODUCED BILAL BAIG, CHAIRMAN OF THE JKIF, AND SYED ALI RAZA, WHOM HAIDER DESCRIBED AS THE PRESIDENT OF JKIF'S POLITICAL WING IN MUZAFFARABAD. HAIDER, WHO HAILS FROM BARAMULLA DISTRICT OF INDIAN KASHMIR AND SAYS HE HAS A MEDICAL DEGREE, DID MOST OF THE TALKING DURING THE NEXT HOUR-AND-A-HALF, THOUGH RAZA DID SPEAK UP OCCASIONALLY, AND BAIG APPEARED TO BE FOLLOWING THE CONVERSATION CLOSELY.

13. (S) HAIDER NEEDED LITTLE PROMPTING TO LAUNCH INTO A CONVOLUTED EXPLANATION OF THE GROUP'S HISTORY AND ITS PHILOSOPHY, MOST OF WHICH IS COVERED MORE COMPREHENSIBLY IN REFTELS B AND C. HAIDER SAID THE GROUP BEGAN AS A PEACEFUL ORGANIZATION CALLED THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR STUDENTS' LIBERATION FRONT IN 1988 AND GRADUALLY METAMORPHOSED INTO THE JKIF OVER THE COURSE OF THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. HAIDER SAID HIS OWN CONVERSION TO VIOLENCE TOOK PLACE IN APRIL 1992, WHEN HE WAS DETAINED AND TORTURED BY INDIAN TROOPS IN SRINAGAR. ROLLING UP HIS PANTS LEG TO REVEAL SEVERAL UGLY GOUGES IN HIS SKIN, HAIDER SAID HE HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO ELECTRIC SHOCKS AND SEVERE BEATINGS WHILE IN CUSTODY. SINCE THEN, HAIDER SAID, HIS ELDER BROTHER HAD BEEN KILLED AND HIS FAMILY HOME DESTROYED BY INDIAN TROOPS, WHILE HE HAD BEEN FORCED TO FLEE TO PAKISTAN IN 11994. "HE TOO HAS SUFFERED," HAIDER SAID POINTING TO BAIG, WHO WAS SITTING IMPASSIVELY ACROSS THE ROOM. BAIG'S SISTER-IN-LAW AND FATHER WERE KILLED BY INDIAN TROOPS, HAIDER CHARGED, AND HIS SISTER, FARADA BAHANJI, HAS BEEN IMPRISONED IN NEW DELHI'S TIHAR JAIL FOR OVER A YEAR BECAUSE OF HER BROTHER'S ACTIVITIES. TO CAP OFF THIS LITANY OF ABUSE, HAIDER PRODUCED SEVERAL PHOTOS OF CORPSES, ALL OF WHOM ALLEGEDLY DIED AT THE HANDS OF INDIAN SECURITY FORCES. ONE PHOTO PURPORTEDLY SHOWED THE REMAINS OF BAIG'S FAMILY HOME WITH A SNAPSHOT OF HIS SISTER SUPERIMPOSED ON IT.

14. (S) WHEN PRESSED TO ELABORATE ON THE GROUP'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, HAIDER DEFERRED TO RAZA, A YOUNG, THIN MAN WITH A FULL BEARD AND TURBAN. RAZA SAID THE JKIF HAD ONLY RECENTLY BEGUN TO FORMULATE A POLITICAL AGENDA AND THE FOCUS WAS STILL ON ARMED RESISTANCE TO INDIAN OCCUPATION OF KASHMIR. THE PRIMARY AIM OF THE JKIF IS KASHMIRI INDEPENDENCE, HE COMMENTED, BUT AFTER INDIAN TROOPS VACATE KASHMIR, THE GROUP WOULD THEN BE AMENABLE TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN RESOLUTIONS, EVEN IF THAT MEANT A VOTE TO JOIN INDIA. THE JKIF IS PRIMARILY A NATIONALIST MOVEMENT, RAZA

CONTINUED, AND DOES NOT ESPOUSE A PARTICULARLY RADICAL BRAND OF ISLAM, DESPITE ITS NAME. AT THIS POINT, HAIDER JUMPED IN AND ENDED THIS SEGMENT OF THE CONVERSATION BY EMBARKING ON A LONG, RAMBLING DISCOURSE ABOUT THE COMMON ROOTS OF JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS, WHILE TAKING PAINS TO MENTION THAT THE JKIF WAS NOT AGAINST "ORDINARY HINDUS."

15. (S) TURNING TO THE GROUP'S MILITARY OPERATIONS, HAIDER SAID THE JKIF'S PRIMARY TARGETS ARE INDIAN REGULAR AND PARAMILITARY FORCES IN KASHMIR, THOUGH HE ADDED THAT "THOSE WHO COMPROMISE" WITH THE INDIANS WERE ALSO KILLED. ASKED WHOM THE JKIF CONSIDERED "COMPROMISERS," HAIDER LISTED BUREAUCRATS AND POLITICIANS IN THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR GOVERNMENT AS THE MAIN CULPRITS, BUT STATED THAT ANYONE WHO "BECOMES A HINDRANCE" WAS ALSO A POTENTIAL TARGET, INCLUDING MUSLIM COLLABORATORS. HAIDER BECAME QUITE AGITATED WHEN DISCUSSING THOSE WHOM THE JKIF CONSIDERED ENEMIES, REPEATEDLY BARING HIS CHEST WHILE STATING THAT HE WAS NOT AFRAID TO DIE FOR KASHMIRI INDEPENDENCE. "I WOULD KILL THE INDIAN PRIME MINISTER IF I COULD," HE ASSERTED. A FAVORITE METHOD OF ATTACKING INDIAN TROOPS IS SUICIDE BOMBINGS, HAIDER ASSERTED, "JUST LIKE HAMAS IN ISRAEL." RDX IS THE EXPLOSIVE OF CHOICE, HE EXPLAINED, AND ATTACKS ARE CAREFULLY PLANNED AFTER TARGETS ARE CASED FOR SEVERAL DAYS. HAIDER WAS EVASIVE WHEN ASKED ABOUT BOMBINGS OF NON-MILITARY TARGETS, BUT HE VEHEMENTLY DENIED THAT THE JKIF WAS A TERRORIST GROUP.

16. (S) HAIDER ESTIMATED THE JKIF'S STRENGTH AT BETWEEN 500 AND 1,000 MILITANTS, DOWN CONSIDERABLY FROM THEIR PEAK IN 1992, WHEN THE GROUP BOASTED 4,000 FIGHTERS. THE INDIANS HAVE KILLED MORE THAN 2,000 JKIF FIGHTERS SINCE THEN, HAIDER ADMITTED, BUT HE SAID THE GROUP STILL FIELDED THE SECOND-LARGEST MILITANT FORCE IN KASHMIR AFTER THE HIZBUL MUJAHEDDIN (NOTE: ALMOST EVERY KASHMIRI MILITANT GROUP CLAIMS TO HAVE THE SECOND-LARGEST NUMBER OF FIGHTERS IN INDIAN KASHMIR, BUT ALL AGREE THAT THE HIZBUL MUJAHEDDIN IS NUMBER ONE). ROUGHLY 200 FIGHTERS ARE IN AZAD KASHMIR AT ANY GIVEN TIME, WHILE THE REST ARE OPERATING INSIDE INDIAN KASHMIR. TRAINING TAKES PLACE IN CAMPS IN AZAD KASHMIR, HAIDER EXPLAINED, BUT HE DENIED THAT THE GROUP RECEIVED ANY ASSISTANCE FROM THE PAKISTANI ARMY. ALL OF THE JKIF'S FIGHTERS ARE KASHMIRIS, EITHER FROM AZAD OR INDIAN KASHMIR, HAIDER CLAIMED, THOUGH HE CONCEDED THAT "ONE OR TWO" AFGHANS COULD BE IN THE GROUP WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE. RECRUITS RANGE IN AGE FROM TEENAGERS TO MEN IN THEIR 40'S AND 50'S, AND ALL RECEIVE ONE TO TWO MONTHS TRAINING BEFORE BEING SENT ACROSS THE LINE-OF-CONTROL (LOC) INTO INDIAN KASHMIR. CROSSING THE LOC IS EXTREMELY DANGEROUS, HAIDER SAID, THEREFORE THE SIZE OF INFILTRATING GROUPS IS KEPT SMALL -- NO MORE THAN 20 MEN -- SO THAT CASUALTIES ARE LIMITED IF THE GROUP IS CAUGHT IN AN INDIAN AMBUSH. HAIDER DENIED THAT PAKISTANI TROOPS PROVIDE COVERING FIRE FOR JKIF MILITANTS.

17. (S) COMMENT: HAIDER SAID HE WOULD PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE GROUP AT OUR NEXT MEETING, WHILE BOTH HE AND BAIG, WHO HAD REMAINED SILENT THROUGHOUT, EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE U.S. VIEWED JKIF AS A TERRORIST OUTFIT (SOMETHING WHICH WE DID NOT BRING UP FOR FEAR OF PROVOKING AN ABRUPT END TO OUR VISIT). USHERING US TO THE DOOR, HAIDER WHISPERED THAT HE WOULD ALSO SHARE WITH US "CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION" ABOUT THE APHC'S ACTIVITIES THE NEXT TIME WE MET. OBVIOUSLY MUCH OF WHAT SAID BY THESE MEN WAS TAILORED TO FIT THE AUDIENCE, BUT WE OFFER IT FOR WHAT IT IS WORTH, AND WE WILL ATTEMPT GLEAN MORE ABOUT THE GROUP AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN FUTURE MEETINGS.

SIMONS